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151536Z Feb 06

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 000968

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/16/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KPAL](#) [EG](#) [IS](#) [MEPN](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAELI DEFMIN VISITS CAIRO: MUBARAK DELIVERS
PUBLIC MESSAGE CALLING FOR PATIENCE ON HAMAS

Classified by DCM Stuart Jones for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) According to Egyptian Presidential Advisor Soliman Awad, the visit to Egypt by Israeli Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz went extremely well. Awad told the DCM shortly after the conclusion of the February 14 visit that Mofaz's meeting with President Mubarak had been "very fruitful." The message Mubarak delivered to Mofaz, Awad said, was that there was no reason for "pessimism." Mubarak asserted that Egypt would continue to support Mahmoud Abbas and would continue to encourage Hamas toward moderation. Mubarak counseled all to wait until Hamas forms a cabinet before taking positions, and suggested there was no reason to rush to move on the Hamas issue. Awad told the DCM that Mofaz had agreed with Mubarak behind closed doors, but had delivered a strong GOI attack on Hamas in press comments after the meeting. Awad shared the Egyptian understanding that Mofaz had to deliver a hard line message, given upcoming Israeli elections.

2. (U) Mofaz met with President Mubarak for the third time in the past year during the brief February 14 visit to Cairo, and was joined by Egyptian Minister of Defense Field Marshal Hussein Tantawi, and Israeli Ambassador to Egypt Shalom Cohen. In public comments after the meeting, Mofaz described the meeting as positive and said he and Mubarak discussed dealing with Hamas, Iranian and Syrian support to Hizballah, and combatting international terrorism and al Qaida. Mofaz said Mubarak had told Hamas to accept Israeli conditions for future dialogue, stating that Mubarak believed the Islamist group would eventually agree to such acceptance. On Israeli conditions for dialogue with Hamas, Mofaz is quoted as saying that Hamas had to end all terrorist activity, gather its weapons, recognize Israel, and accept all agreements signed previously between Israel and the Palestinians.

3. (U) On the margins of the Mofaz visit, President Mubarak gave an interview to Israeli TV Channel One in which he was quoted in GOE state media requesting the international community give Hamas a chance, adding that Israel and Hamas could reach a common ground on peace in the region. Mubarak said that he saw flexibility in Hamas' positions and that a permanent and just peace between Israel and the Palestinians could still be reached. Mubarak added that Israeli Acting Prime Minister Olmert also understands developments in the region and was capable of successfully steering the Middle East peace process. Israeli media report that Mubarak asserted Egypt would not tell Hamas to abandon its goal of destroying Israel - "We're not going to tell them to abandon anything; they'll refuse." The question needs time and effort from them and from you (Israel), he asserted.

4. (C) Comment. We do not believe Mubarak's public remarks on Hamas reflect a change in Egyptian policy. Mubarak's message to Israeli FM Livni, to Mofaz, and to us via EGIS Chief Soliman is not to panic and make rash decisions before the government formation process unfolds. We know Egypt is as close to Israel as at any time in the past decade, that it strongly supports Abu Mazen in the Presidency, and does not want to see a radical Islamic government on its doorstep.
End comment.
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